



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Region 6

**1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200
Dallas, TX 75202-2733**

October 17, 2013

Carl Highsmith
Federal Highway Administration
Louisiana Division
5304 Flanders Drive, Suite A
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

Subject: Interstate 69 Segment of Independent Utility 15, Bossier, Caddo, and DeSoto Parishes, Louisiana [CEQ# 20130247]

Dear Mr. Highsmith,

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas, has completed its review of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Interstate 69 Segment of Independent Utility 15 prepared by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

EPA rated the Draft EIS as EC-2, "Environmental Concerns and Requests Additional Information in the Final EIS" due to air quality issues. The EPA's Rating System Criteria can be found here: <http://www.epa.gov/oecaerth/nepa/comments/ratings.html>.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review the FEIS. EPA requests that LADOTD and FHWA address our concerns in a revised Final EIS or Supplemental Analysis document to complete the NEPA process. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Rhonda Smith, Chief, Office of Planning and Coordination at 214-665-8006 or the project manager John MacFarlane at 214-665-7491 or macfarlane.john@epa.gov for assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra A. Griffin".

Debra A. Griffin
Associate Director
Compliance Assurance and
Enforcement Division

Enclosure

cc: Noel Ardoin, LADOTD

**DETAILED COMMENTS ON THE
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION'S
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR THE INTERSTATE 69
SECTION OF INDEPENDENT UTILITY 15
BOSSIER, CADDO, AND DESOTO PARISHES**

BACKGROUND:

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to construct a four-lane fully controlled access highway on new location design to interstate standards. The Interstate 69 (I-69) project extends between U.S. Highway 171 near the town of Stonewall in DeSoto Parish and I-20 near the town of Haughton in Bossier Parish, a distance of approximately 35 miles.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Eight years have elapsed since the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), thus, the environmental conditions of the project area may have changed. Therefore, some of our comments will require updates and additional language and/or evaluation. EPA requests the LADOTD and FHWA revise the Final EIS (FEIS) to accommodate our comments or prepare a supplemental analysis (SA). The SA should be made available prior to the issuance of the Record of Decision (ROD) and included in the record.

The revised FEIS or SA should ensure that all resources are properly updated, characterized, and quantified because of the extended period of time between the DEIS and FEIS. We are especially concerned with homes and businesses that may be displaced by the proposed project. New homes and businesses can be constructed within just a few months, thus, this information must be appropriately updated. If new homes and businesses are discovered, the owners should be provided the opportunity for public participation.

Children's Health

Since the release of the DEIS, Children's Health has become an issue of concern for EPA and other federal agencies. Executive Order 13045 on Children's Health and Safety directs that each federal agency shall make it a high priority to identify and assess environmental health and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children, and shall ensure that its policies, programs, activities, and standards address these risks. Analysis and disclosure of these potential effects under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is necessary because some physiological and behavioral traits of children render them more susceptible and vulnerable than adults to health and safety risks. Children may be more highly exposed to contaminants because they generally eat more food, drink more water, and have higher inhalation rates relative to their size. Also, children's normal activities, such as putting their hands in their mouths or playing on the ground, can result in higher exposures to contaminants as compared with adults. Children may be more vulnerable to the toxic effects of contaminants because their bodies and systems are not fully developed and their growing organs are more easily harmed.

Based on current EPA policy and guidance, an analysis of impacts to children should be included in a NEPA analysis if there is a possibility of disproportionate impact on children related to the proposed action.¹ EPA views childhood as a sequence of life stages, from conception through fetal development, infancy, and adolescence. Therefore, exposures to children at each life stage, as well as pregnant and nursing women, are relevant and should be considered when addressing health and safety risks for children.

Because children can be more susceptible to noise levels, mobile source air pollution, construction dust, and the chemicals associated with building and construction materials, we recommend that the revised FEIS or SA specifically address the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project on children's health, including consideration of prenatal exposures (exposures that may be experienced by pregnant women). Without a children's health evaluation, EPA cannot determine if there may be a possibility of disproportionate impacts on children from the selected alignment.

Recommendations:

The revised FEIS or SA should first determine if children are present within the project area, if so, then impacts to children's health should be evaluated. Although there may be no schools within the study area, there may be daycares, homes, and churches where children live and play. If an evaluation finds that there are children present within the study area, the FEIS should address children's exposures and susceptibilities to the pollutants of concern, which should include the following:

- **Identification of the pollutants and sources of concern:** Consider exposure and impacts to children from mobile source air pollutants, including children's proximity to transportation corridors, transportation hubs and ports, and project construction emissions. Combine these with other area sources/baseline air quality, such as, existing or new power generation or energy extraction facilities, mining operations, industrial facilities, dry cleaners, etc.
- **Exposure Assessment:** Describe demographics of affected neighborhoods/populations/communities and focus exposure assessments on schools, recreation areas, childcare centers, parks, and residential areas in close proximity to the proposed project, and other areas of apparent frequent and/or prolonged exposure.
- **Baseline health conditions:** Consider obtaining and including available relevant health data/records for the neighborhoods/populations/communities of concern.
- **Respiratory Impacts/Asthma:** Consider data on existing asthma rates and asthma severity among children and the general community living, working, playing, and attending school and daycare near the project site. To the extent feasible, identify impacts of the project on asthma rates and severity in children near the project site and quantify associated costs.
- **Noise Impacts:** Consider impacts from noise on health and learning, especially near homes, schools and daycare centers.
- **Impacts Regarding Obesity Factors:** Consider potential impacts that could influence childhood obesity factors, such as impacts on school commutes, and on the accessibility of neighborhood parks, green spaces, and recreation areas.

¹ <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/policies/nepa/children-health-risks-pg.pdf>

- **Impacts from Air Pollutant Emissions:** Consider exposure and impacts to children from mobile source air pollutants, including proximity to transportation corridors, transportation hubs, and ports, and project construction emissions. Combine these with other area sources/baseline air quality.
- **Impacts from Other Chemical or Physical Exposures:** Consider impacts to children from other site activities, such as pesticide application, demolition, etc...

These resources may assist you in the evaluation of children's health impacts.

America's Children and the Environment (ACE) presents data on children's environmental health. ACE brings together information from a variety of sources to provide national indicators in areas of environments and contaminants, bio-monitoring, health rates for asthma, and others. The objectives of EPA's ACE report is to 1) compile data from a variety of sources to present concrete, quantifiable indicators for key factors relevant to the environment and children's health in the United States, 2) inform discussions among policymakers and the public about how to improve data on children's health and the environment, and 3) include indicators that can be used by policymakers and the public to track trends in children's environmental health, and ultimately to help identify and evaluate ways to minimize environmental impacts on children.

Asthma rates are high in Louisiana with the childhood current asthma prevalence of 8.3 percent and the lifetime prevalence rate of about 11.6 percent.² Ozone is a trigger for asthma attacks. Increased traffic patterns in the community may increase the incidence of asthma attacks.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) state asthma statistics are available by state if the state is an asthma control program grantee. Louisiana is currently a grantee. Contact information for the Louisiana asthma program is:

Mark Perry
Asthma Program Manager
Louisiana Asthma Management and Prevention
Mark.Perry@la.gov
225-342-2657
<http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/directory/detail/4946>

CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance: <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>

Another site for data is <http://childstats.gov/>

4.8.1 Surface Water Resources

Table 4-7 lists the various waterways that will be impacted by the proposed project and the type of crossing structure; culvert or bridge. However, the FEIS does not provide the areal extent of impacts to waterways, nor does it fully characterize the physical attributes of the waterways.

² <http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/brfss/2010/child/lifetime/tableL1.htm>

Recommendation:

The information located in Appendix N, Table 1 - Surface Water Impacts Summary should be provided in Table 4-7. The table should also include the type of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit required, e.g. nationwide, pre-construction notification, individual.

Chapter 3.8 - Water Quality should contain a characterization of the physical attributes of each waterway impacted by the proposed project. Attributes should include the ordinary high water mark, floodplain width, depth, etc.

4.13 Farmlands

All alternative alignments would impact agricultural lands. Converting productive agricultural lands to transportation uses not only directly converts that land from arable land to impervious surfaces, but reduces the amount of food and fiber produced in this region. By reducing crops available for sale, farm revenues may be adversely affected. Farmers would incur access issues and longer travel times when traveling to fields that are bisected by the proposed project.

Recommendation:

- The FEIS should fully disclose the local and regional economic impacts of converting an estimated 1,202 acres of farmland to transportation uses, including additional conversion by induced development. The discussion of impacts should include an analysis of farmland access and farm equipment travel time.

4.15 Air Quality

EPA recommends adding a description of the impact to air quality (increases/decreases in existing traffic congestion, increases in vehicle capacity over the functional life of the project, increased demands on established transportation systems for towns/cities that the roadway will be serving) expected from the operation of the proposed highway, particularly with respect to the transportation-related criteria pollutants.

4.15.1 Air Quality Construction Impacts

This document correctly states that the study area of Bossier, Caddo, and DeSoto Parishes within the Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments' planning boundaries is currently in attainment of all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). It should be noted that the Shreveport-Bossier City Metropolitan Statistical Area is vulnerable to being designated as non-attainment for ozone in the next few years. The City of Shreveport has applied for and been accepted by EPA into the EPA Ozone Advance program, with other entities in the area (City of Bossier City, Caddo Parish Commission, Bossier Parish Police Jury, DeSoto Parish Police Jury, and the Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments) expressing support and interest in joining the program. The Advance program is a collaborative effort between EPA, states, and local governments to enact expeditious emission reductions to help near non-attainment areas remain in attainment of the NAAQS. This further reflects the sensitivity of

ozone levels in the area, and the need for federally-funded projects in the study area to consider emissions which contribute to the formation of ozone.

Because of the air quality concerns of significant population centers within the FEIS study area, EPA recommends that in order to reduce potential short-term air quality impacts associated with construction activities, the agencies responsible for the project should also include a Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan and adopt this plan in the ROD.

Recommendation:

In addition to all applicable local, state, or federal requirements, EPA recommends that the following mitigation measures be included in the Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan in order to reduce impacts associated with emissions of NO_x, CO, PM, SO₂, and other pollutants from construction-related activities:

Fugitive Dust Source Controls:

- Stabilize open storage piles and disturbed areas by covering and/or applying water or chemical/organic dust palliative where appropriate at active and inactive sites during workdays, weekends, holidays, and windy conditions;
- Install wind fencing and phase grading operations where appropriate, and operate water trucks for stabilization of surfaces under windy conditions; and
- Prevent spillage when hauling material and operating non-earthmoving equipment and limit speeds to 15 miles per hour. Limit speed of earth-moving equipment to 10 mph.

Mobile and Stationary Source Controls:

- Plan construction scheduling to minimize vehicle trips;
- Limit idling of heavy equipment to less than 5 minutes and verify through unscheduled inspections;
- Maintain and tune engines per manufacturer's specifications to perform at EPA certification levels, prevent tampering, and conduct unscheduled inspections to ensure these measures are followed;
- If practicable, utilize new, clean equipment meeting the most stringent of applicable Federal or State Standards. In general, commit to the best available emissions control technology. Tier 4 engines should be used for project construction equipment to the maximum extent feasible;
- Lacking availability of non-road construction equipment that meets Tier 4 engine standards, the responsible agency should commit to using EPA-verified particulate traps, oxidation catalysts and other appropriate controls where suitable to reduce emissions of diesel particulate matter and other pollutants at the construction site; and
- Consider alternative fuels and energy sources such as natural gas and electricity (plug-in or battery).

Administrative controls:

- Prepare an inventory of all equipment prior to construction and identify the suitability of add-on emission controls for each piece of equipment before groundbreaking;
- Develop a construction traffic and parking management plan that maintains traffic flow and plan construction to minimize vehicle trips; and

- Identify sensitive receptors in the project area, such as children, elderly, and infirmed, and specify the means by which impacts to these populations will be minimized (e.g. locate construction equipment and staging zones away from sensitive receptors and building air intakes).

Appendix E. Tribal Resources

The FEIS indicates that Federally-recognized Tribes were contacted for coordination and government-to-government consultation; however, the State of Louisiana recognizes non-Federally Recognized Tribes like the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana.

Recommendation:

EPA recommends LADOTD contact state-recognized Tribes, including the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, for additional coordination.

Additional Comments

- EPA recommends the bridge over the Red River be designed with the ability to collect and treat all stormwater runoff before it is discharged into the river. Runoff should be conveyed to a central location(s) where petroleum, salt, sand, and other materials are removed and/or treated prior to discharge. This would ensure the river and surrounding waters remain in attainment for their designated uses under the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's Water Quality Standards.
- Table 3-8 on page 3-18 should define each of the Designated Uses listed in the table.
- The term "floodways" should be defined.

